



## REGION 6

48 Devonshire Road • Montesano, Washington 98563 • (360) 249-4628 FAX (360) 664-0689

April 18, 2006

Dear Commercial Razor Clam Digger:

A commercial season for razor clam digging has been approved by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for 2006. **The commercial razor clam season is tentatively scheduled to begin Friday, May 12, 2006** and extend through June 30, 2006. Commercial harvest will only be allowed on the Detached Willapa Spits.

The season is contingent on acceptable levels of marine biotoxins. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) will test for biotoxin levels before and during the fishery. The season will open when DOH confirms that biotoxin levels are low enough to allow harvest. **Check the commercial razor clam "hotline" for to up-to-date information regarding sampling and test results: (360) 249-4628 ext. 262.** Any increase in biotoxins over established action levels will mean a postponement or cancellation of the fishery and may mean a product recall. Please call the hotline before digging to determine the status of the fishery.

A public meeting was held March 22, 2006 at Raymond to discuss potential opening dates for the 2006 commercial season. Other topics covered included a review of the 2006 season, a brief update about the razor clam mortality study that commercial diggers assisted with in 2004, and the need again to post a boundary between the Willapa spits and Leadbetter Point.

Copies of the 2006 report and general information about the commercial razor clam fishery can be found at [www.wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/comm/index.htm](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/comm/index.htm). Diggers should be aware that, like last year, it will be necessary to place posts to delineate the boundary between the spits and Leadbetter Point.

In response to industry concerns that unlicensed diggers were participating in the fishery, the rule (WAC 220-52-030) requiring licenses was re-written last year to make it clearer. The rule states that diggers must have a license to "take, dig for or possess" razor clams. Also, diggers are reminded to follow regulations for identifying the containers holding their clams. Diggers should also obtain "transport tickets" from WDFW Licensing if they intend to sell clams at some location other than the point of landing. A limited supply of transport tickets is available at the Region 6 office at Montesano.

In order to participate in the 2006 fishery, you will need Item #1 below if you work for a DOH certified company. To be able to purchase clams (either as an individual or company) all three items listed must be obtained.

1. **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Commercial Razor Clam License.** An application for this license is enclosed. *Each person applying for a commercial razor clam license must complete and sign an application.* The fees are \$130 for Washington state residents or \$185 for non-residents. License applications are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lic/razorclm.pdf>
2. **DOH Shellfish License and Certification and Inspection of your operation by DOH.** Contact Frank Cox (360) 236-3309 for an application and Plan of Operation Questionnaire if you or your company plans to be licensed and certified by DOH.
3. **WDFW Wholesale Dealer's License.** Contact WDFW Licensing (360) 902-2464 if you plan to buy clams and do not have a Wholesale Dealer's License. Only licensed wholesale dealers can purchase clams.

**If you intend to dig for a certified dealer:**

Contact a dealer certified by the Department of Health (DOH) and arrange to be included on the dealer's list of registered diggers. Diggers may register with no more than two dealers at any one time. Once a dealer(s) has agreed to register you with their company, they will submit your name to the Department of Health. DOH will then forward your name to Licensing at WDFW. Commercial razor clam licenses will only be sold to those individuals whose names have been provided by DOH.

If you apply by mail, your license will not be issued until your name has been received from DOH. If you plan to purchase a license in person, call WDFW Licensing at (360) 902-2464 first to confirm that DOH has provided Licensing your name.

Companies may add diggers to their Plan of Operation during the season but WDFW will not issue licenses until an updated list is provided by DOH. Diggers may change companies during season but must follow the same steps described above.

Wholesale dealers must complete a fish ticket for *all* commercially harvested razor clams (WAC 220-69-240 or WAC 220-69-241) whether clams are sold, kept by the digger for crab bait, or intended for personal use (WAC 220-20-026). Personal use is limited to one recreational limit (15 clams) per day per digger and must be recorded in the "Take Home" section of the fish receiving ticket (WAC 220-20-026).

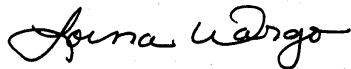
Diggers must carry their commercial license on their person while harvesting and while in possession of clams. Unlicensed persons are not permitted to assist with harvesting operations. The minimum age for licensing in the commercial razor clam fishery is 16 years.

The list of diggers for each company will be provided to WDFW Enforcement and dealers may be held responsible for digger compliance with all appropriate rules. Citations can be issued for violations of either WDFW or DOH regulations.

Diggers should also be aware that license fees cannot be refunded once the commercial razor clam season has been opened (even if only for a few hours or days). If elevated biotoxin levels force an early closure of the fishery, reasonable effort will be made to continue sampling biotoxin levels to determine when or if the fishery can resume.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need assistance. My phone number is 249-1221.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorna Wargo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lorna Wargo

Coastal Shellfish/Marine Fish Biologist

cc: Dan Ayres, WDFW, Coastal Shellfish Lead Biologist  
Captain Mike Cenci, WDFW Enforcement  
WDFW Licensing  
Frank Cox, Washington Department of Health, Biotoxin Coordinator